Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools

FACT SHEET

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Safe Communities ~ Safe Schools Model

A safe school plan is a framework for action that can be used as a guide for current and future planning. It addresses both the behavioral and property protection aspects of violence prevention. The goal of safe school planning is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, intimidation, and fear, an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn. Establishing a safe school plan is a long-term, systematic, and comprehensive process. As with most successful violence prevention interventions, the best safe school plan involves the entire community.

Components of a Safe School Plan

1. Convene a Safe School Planning Team:
   The planning team is the driving force behind the planning process and should consist of a variety of representatives from all aspects of the community including students (if age appropriate), parents, teachers, administrators, Board of Education members, government representatives, business representatives, religious leaders, law enforcement officials, etc.

2. Conduct a School Site Assessment:
   An annual school site assessment should be conducted and used as an evaluation and planning tool to determine the extent of any school safety problems and/or school climate issues. The assessment should consider the following:

   - Parent and Community Involvement
   - Discipline Policy
   - School Climate
   - School Crime and Violence Monitoring and Reporting
   - School Safety and Security
   - Crisis Management
   - Student Resources
   - Information Sharing
   - At-Risk Student Assessment and Referral

3. Develop Strategies & Implement Violence Prevention Programs to Address School Safety Concerns:
   In an effort to meet the needs identified in the annual school site assessment, some strategies to consider are:
   - Establish a clear code of behavior that includes the rights and responsibilities of both adults and students within the school community.
   - Include all youth in positive, rewarding activities and relationships at school.
   - Review federal, state, and local statutes pertaining to student management and school order with the school district lawyer as well as review relevant school and district policies.
   - Control campus access and establish uniform visitor screening procedures.
   - Keep an accurate and detailed record of all school crime incidents.
   - Promote an ongoing relationship with local law enforcement authorities, local businesses,

and other community organizations.
- Provide a school or district hotline that can be accessed anonymously to report a threat or pending violent incident.
- Establish guidelines and procedures for identifying students at risk of violence toward themselves or others.

- Identify effective violence prevention programs that meet the needs of the school community, including both in-school programs and community programs appropriate for referring students and families. Examples include the following Blueprints for Violence Prevention Model and Promising programs:

  o The Incredible Years
  o Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies
  o Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
  o Life Skills Training
  o Midwestern Prevention Program
  o Project Towards No Drug Abuse
  o Behavior Monitoring and Reinforcement Program
  o FAST Track
  o Perry Preschool Program
  o Good Behavior Game
  o School Transitional Environmental Program
  o I Can Problem Solve
  o Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers
  o Project Northland
  o Skills, Opportunities and Recognition (Seattle Social Development Project)

4. Establish an Interagency Social Support Team (ISST):
The purpose of this team is to help improve the social climate of the school. Members, including school administrators, counselors, school social workers, mental health workers, and law enforcement provide information necessary to identify whether a student is at-risk and the most appropriate support for that student.

5. Develop an Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) Plan:
In the event of a natural disaster or emergency at school, an All Hazards Emergency Response and Crisis Management plan outlines specific procedures for teachers and staff during various emergencies, including responding to a violent incident. Having a plan in place that is regularly practiced can provide a clear understanding of what needs to happen when unforeseen problems arise.

This is only a framework for a safe school plan. No two safe school plans are exactly the same. Each school community must identify its own needs and the strategies necessary to meet those needs. A safe school plan is not static, but an ongoing process. Whether the violence in your district is presently alarming or not, now is the time to institute a school/community developed and implemented safe school plan to ensure a peaceful environment for children to grow and learn. Remember that the key to a safe school is creating a welcoming, friendly, supportive environment with clear guidelines for appropriate behavior that are enforced fairly and consistently.

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